

Armenians of New York

By JOHN MARION.

ARSHAG NOURIAN, who resoles shoes and affixes rubber heels to them in his little basement shop on Second avenue, is learning new songs to accompany his labor. To-day he was whistling "Feather Your Nest," and he flashed a row of brilliant white teeth with his welcoming smile. When I first came to his shop last year he hummed only odd, minor, monotonous Armenian songs, which are the saddest songs in the world.

"So she is on her way at last?" I said.

"Yes, she will come in two weeks," Nourian speaks perfect English. "Nine years since I have seen her, and seven years when I did not hear from her."

"Will you know her when you see her?"

"You don't forget your mother that quick!" he said.

"You will be renting a flat for a home now, won't you? She will keep house for you?" I asked.

Nourian grinned. "I am going to get married. My mother is bringing a wife for me, a girl of our village. She was a child when I came to America, but I remember her. They call her Aghavni—that means 'dove.' She is like the name."

From Land of Tragedy.

Arshag Nourian, of a race that might be called Children of Tragedy, has found America truly the land of happy endings. Nine or ten years ago he joined the steady stream of emigration to America. His uncle had come to this country earlier in 1895, the massacre year.

"Before that time there were only a few students and travelers of my people here," Nourian tells me. "Then, all in one year thousands of us came over. It was the time, you remember, when the Turks desired to abolish Christianity throughout their empire. They found the Armenians obstinate, and so they started to abolish the Armenians. All who could get out of the country fled to America. Why America? Because missionaries had come to us with schools and hospitals and stories of a wonderful country where there was no oppression."

"My father's brother was among these first Armenian immigrants."

In twenty years, from 1895 to 1915, more than 70,000 Armenians flocked to the United States. Nine-tenths of them were men; mostly young men, eager to make good, anxious to save enough money to send for their relatives. They came to America to stay. Less than 15 per cent. returned to their native land.

Armenia of the City.

Rather a small proportion settled in New York. It is estimated that at this time there are between 10,000 and 12,000 Armenians resident in the city. Most of them live on the East Side between Seventeenth and Thirty-fifth streets.

To continue with Nourian's story. He considered what line of business to enter. The field of common labor was open, of course, but offered little reward for personal initiative. He looked with envy on the stores that dealt in Oriental rugs. He had a natural eye for color, common among Armenians, and he loved the gorgeous blue and rose and ivory of the beautiful rugs from the East.

Nourian had no capital to embark upon anything so ambitious as merchandizing. Tailoring and cobbling were popular occupations among his countrymen. His uncle decided the question for him. He had a little shoe repair establishment, and he took his young kinsman in with him.

Nourian worked early and late. The diligence of these recruits to our citizenship is a reproach to Americans who have abandoned the strenuous program. There is no eight-hour day. With a definite purpose in view, they have no regard for the clock, but coin their hours into cash to the limit of their ability. Nourian had almost achieved his first goal, the passage money for his parents, when the war broke out.

At first a few letters trickled through, then abruptly all correspondence ceased; 1915 and 1916 were troubled years for many peo-

ples, but probably for no one so much as the Armenian race. When you consider the disasters of the war, think of a race, not simply decimated but cut down 25 per cent. One-quarter of the total population killed, hundreds of thousands deported, shifted about and lost. Scarcely an Armenian in America but has been involved in some way in this terrible confusion. Of the married emigrants who came here prior to the war, half had left wives and families in Armenia. Practically every one had parents, brothers and sisters

Russia and the Balkans and all the Turkish Empire gather.

He wrote to arrange for her passage and sent money for her immediate needs. He intimated also that if she should know of some attractive young lady she might fancy as a daughter-in-law he would be glad to forward passage money for two. The reply to that was the promise of Aghavni.

By the time Aghavni and mother arrive Nourian will have his home ready for them. It will be on the top floor somewhere in the neighborhood



He looked with envy on the stores that dealt in Oriental rugs.

in the home country.

Nourian's savings continued to accumulate with the war boom in prices, and his native thrift which saved him from war extravagances, but there was only irony in the good fortune that came too late. He served two years in the American army, and returned to his small shop in 1919 with an honorable record, a little doughboy French and a citation for valor.

The business was now all his own, for his uncle had died. He wanted to settle down in a home of his own. Of Armenian girls there were practically none of marriageable age. If he had not lost trace of his parents, he would have written to them to select a bride for him.

Letters written in the Turkish language, subjected to strict censorship, were allowed to pass when peace was restored. Nourian wrote to his home village, and received word that his father was dead, his mother gone, no one knew where. The Near East Relief offered its resources, and to this organization Nourian turned for help in locating his mother. Two more years passed and there seemed little hope.

Then came the word which set Nourian to whistling gay American tunes, and buying plans for a home and women folks. His mother had been found at last among the polyglot refugees in Constantinople, where the lost, strayed and stolen of

of his shop. It is an interesting fact that Armenians always live on the fifth floor of the tenement houses, high up where there is sunshine and air and access to the roof. That is a relic of their outdoor life in their own country.

He is already planning for his wedding. It must be a very grand affair, for he feels like celebrating now, after all these years of loneliness. It will be held in the Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator, and all the elaborate Armenian ceremony will be performed.

Friends Serve as Mentors.

Most young married couples consider outside advice quite dispensable, but at Armenian weddings two married friends of the bride and groom stand up with them through the ceremony and have a right to offer arbitration and advice to them ever after. There is no wedding cake, but the lack is not felt. There is plenty to compensate. Even at the humblest weddings there is always provided a huge dish of candy, Jordan almonds, colored rock sugar and little hard candies of all sorts. Nourian intends to have a very fine feast as well, with all kinds of Armenian dishes.

Cooking is a fine art among the Armenians, and eating is an aesthetic exercise, not merely a matter of getting fed. The distinctiveness of their dishes lies not so much in the ingredients as in the exceeding excellence

of their preparation. Lamb is the favorite meat, almost exclusively so. Lamb and vegetables cooked together and flavored with just the right dash of spices and herbs appear with infinite variations. In little Armenian restaurants along Lexington avenue you may order shish kebab, which is lamb broiled in bits on a skewer, or pilaff, which is buttered rice with pignola nuts, or enginar bassdi, artichokes stuffed with chopped meat, or paklava, delicious nut pastry, or lokma, a sort of fritter served with lemon flavored sirup, or matzoon, which is simply sour milk.

The Armenian church is the oldest national church in the world. It was adopted as the State religion by King Tiridates in the year 301 A. D., but

churches are thronged. The richness of imagery in the service is not equaled in any other. The music is pitched in a minor key, often an almost inarticulate wailing, but the vestments are full of vivid color.

Although Armenian immigration in estimable numbers dates back only twenty-eight years, there were Armenians here earlier than that. To one of them, a student and chemist, Dr. Seropian, every American is indebted for the formula for the green ink which makes our greenbacks difficult to counterfeit. So far as our records reveal, the first naturalized citizen on American soil was an Armenian. In the history of the Jamestown colony, founded in 1618, it is set down that "Martin, ye Armenian," became a naturalized British subject while he was in residence in Virginia.

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Scattering Population

LONDON has been engaged in breaking up her congested districts and scattering excess urban population to outlying suburbs and even farther afield. This work was started in earnest in 1911, when London had 179,982 persons on its densest 821 acres, an average of 219 an acre. These figures refer to sanitary districts. They may be compared to advantage with figures furnished by the New York City Census Committee.

The committee sets forth that in Manhattan there are 80 sanitary districts that house more persons than 219 to the acre. Brooklyn has 632 acres, almost a square mile, of over 219 to the acre, with a population of 168,815. The Bronx does not yet reach London's 821 acres of 219 population.

Greater New York in 1920 had a million and a half more persons housed in her densest areas than

London had in 1911. While London has been cutting down her figures since then, New York has been adding to them. The statement is made that 57 per cent. of Manhattan's population lives on less than 25 per cent. of its area.

Women as Publishers

WOMEN are making themselves felt as publishers.

There was but one woman book publisher in New York before the amendment to the Constitution gave the "sex" their rights, but now there are several. The Woman's Press, however, has the distinction of being the only publishing house managed and run by women. On its prospective list for the autumn is "Do's and Don'ts for Business Women," by Miss Jean Riche.